Legal
Services
Society

British Columbia
www.lss.bc.ca

News Release

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For Immediate Release:

Legal aid to provide limited Supreme Court family referrals

Vancouver, BC — Legal aid in BC now provides limited family referrals for clients who cannot avoid taking their dispute to Supreme Court, but are not eligible for regular legal representation services.

Limited scope Supreme Court family referrals allow lawyers to "unbundle" their usual services so they can provide some help to eligible clients who need more assistance than family duty counsel and advice lawyers can provide. The referrals give clients up to 14 hours of assistance from a lawyer (excluding representation in court).

Services covered by the referrals range from advising clients about their legal options and negotiating with opposing parties, to providing mediation support and coaching clients to represent themselves in court.

This is another of the family service improvements the Legal Services Society is making as a result of the provincial government's recent increase in core funding for legal aid. The new funding also supports family duty counsel services in Provincial Courts; a new extended family services program for legal aid clients whose high conflict cases, if left unresolved, would leave them at great risk; and family duty counsel services in Supreme Courts (under development).

The attached backgrounder outlines eligibility criteria and services offered through limited Supreme Court family referrals, as well as information about other legal aid advice and representation services.

For further information, contact:

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(604) 601-6004

LSS is an independent, non-profit organization that has provided legal aid to people with low incomes in BC since 1979.

Legal representation is available for serious family issues (e.g., involving child apprehension matters or domestic violence) and serious criminal problems. It is also available for some immigration, mental health law, and prison law matters.

Legal advice is available through criminal duty counsel in all courts, family duty counsel in Provincial Courts, the Brydges Line, and several pilot projects scheduled to operate until July 29, 2005 – including an enhanced LawLINE project that provides brief legal services to people with low incomes.

Legal information is available through the province-wide toll-free LawLINE, plain language publications, and Internet services, including the Electronic Law Library, the Family Law in British Columbia, the LSS, and the LawLINK websites.

*To contact the **LSS Call Centre and LawLINE**, dial: (604) 408-2172 (Lower Mainland) or 1-866-577-2525 (toll free from outside the Lower Mainland).*